

Remarks

Claims 28-50 are currently pending. Claims 51-61 have been canceled. Claims 28-47 have been amended to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicants regard as the invention. Support for the amendment to the claims can be found at, for example, page 10, line 24 to page 11, line 5 and page 11, lines 12-14 of the application. No new matter has been added. In view of the amendments and following remarks, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration by the Examiner, and advancement of the application to allowance.

35 U.S.C. § 112

The Examiner rejected claims 28-61 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph as being indefinite. Independent claim 28 has been amended to clarify which component is at least substantially encapsulated by the binding agent. In view of the foregoing amendment to claim 28, Applicants respectfully request the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph be withdrawn.

The Examiner further rejected claim 61 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph as lacking enablement. In view of the foregoing amendments to claims, this rejection is moot.

35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

The Examiner rejected claims 28-61 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious over Heidingsfeld et al. (US 5,455,312) in view of Cochran (US 6,156,403). Applicants respectfully submit the Examiner has not established a *prima facie* case of obviousness for the present set of claims.

Heidingsfeld et al. teaches a process for producing plastics containing TPU by (i) melting the TPU in an extruder and (ii) adding an isocyanate to the extruder containing the melted TPU. Heidingsfeld et al. further teaches the TPU may be blended with fibrous reinforcing materials. Heidingsfeld et al. does not teach or suggest encapsulating a preformed TPU body with a binding agent comprising a polyisocyanate or prepolymer thereof as claimed in the present application.

Adding the teachings of Cochran to Heidingsfeld et al. also does not bring the skilled person closer to the presently claimed invention. Cochran teaches the use of organic microspheres as reinforcement for TPU while the TPU is being formed in situ about the microspheres. Cochran does not teach or suggest a foamable TPU pellet comprising a preformed TPU body and thermally expandable hydrocarbon-containing microspheres as claimed in the present application. Furthermore, simply replacing the fibrous reinforcing materials in Heidingsfeld et al. with the microspheres taught in Cochran would not work since the temperature of the TPU melt in Heidingsfeld et al. would cause the microspheres to expand prematurely. Thus, neither Heidingsfeld et al. nor Cochran, alone or in combination, teach Applicants presently claimed invention. Applicants respectfully request the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) be withdrawn.

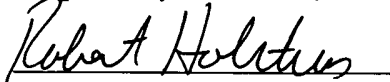
Conclusion

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully submit that the application is now in condition for allowance, and respectfully request issuance of a Notice of Allowance directed towards the pending claims.

The Commissioner of Patents is hereby authorized to deduct any fee due in connection with the filing of this document from Huntsman Corporation Deposit Account No. 08-3442.

Date: 9/15/06

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Robert Holthus", written over a horizontal line.

Robert Holthus

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